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Press Release

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Leading the Way in Influenza Prevention! EBR Schools, HCS Innovative Program Ahead of State Flu Curve

PRESS CONFERENCE SLATED MONDAY MORNING!

Baton Rouge, LA – Last year’s pilot program to vaccinate students for seasonal influenza in **East Baton Rouge Parish public schools** has paid off in big dividends this year as flu awareness and prevention is on the rise due to the influx of the swine flu (H1N1). **Now the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) and Health Centers in Schools (HCS) are well prepared for this year’s higher interest in flu vaccinations** and, later, swine flu vaccinations.

EBRPSS and HCS will kick off the seasonal flu vaccination program with a press conference at 10 a.m. Monday, October 5, at Winbourne Elementary School’s library, 4503 Winbourne Ave. Guest speakers are Sue Catchings, CEO of HCS; John Dilworth, superintendent of EBRPSS; Dr. Stewart Gordon, the pediatric medicine expert to HCS’ board; and John Paul Funes, CEO of the Our Lady of the Lake Foundation.

Beginning October 5 and ending right before the Thanksgiving holiday, students at scheduled public schools each week will receive free vaccinations for the flu -- if they have a signed parental permission slip. **Students with permission slips will receive the FluMist nasal spray, but those with asthma, chronic disease or compromised immune systems are encouraged to obtain the injection from their physician instead.** This is **for seasonal flu, not swine flu** (H1N1).

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FLU VACCINATIONS/2

“Last year, the school district was a demonstration site for the state of Louisiana and immunized 8,000 children against influenza. This year, we hope to immunize 40 percent of the School System’s student body across its 83 campuses,” **Catchings** said. “This is one of the most important projects we do. The impact is not only for the children but the entire community. The reason is simple: research indicates if we immunize the children, we stop the spread of disease in their age group and across all age groups. This includes older citizens, where the effect is a 35-percent drop in flu cases, according to research.”

Informational packets are being released to parents beginning this week (and each week based on the date of the program going on at each school). The packets include a permission slip, which parents must fill out completely and sign for students to receive the free vaccination. **The vaccinations begin with Banks and Winbourne elementary schools on Monday, October 5.**

“This program will help us reduce the number of flu cases in the schools, community and families,” **Dilworth** said. “Just by vaccinating a child, we can help keep our schools and our community safe and healthy places for learning and growing.”

In the meantime, school officials are keeping areas sanitized and asking students to wash their hands often and cough into their arm. Also, they are asking that if any family member comes down with symptoms of the flu, family members should have them see a physician and keep them home until symptoms have passed for at least 24 hours after medication ends. If parents have students with a flu-like illness, they should contact the student’s school and their physician. To date, there have been 417 H1N1 cases reported to the schools.

The schedule for each school’s vaccinations is attached. For more information, contact Catchings at (225) 721-1748.

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